

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

5 1. An image output processor for receiving data transmitted from a plurality of data processors connected to the image output processor and for outputting the data to a printer having a plurality of sorter bins, the image output processor comprising:

10 data transmission source identifying means for identifying the transmission source of data transmitted from the data processors; and

15 sorter bin determining means for determining to which sorter bin to output the data received from the plurality of data processors based on the data transmission source identified by the data transmission source identifying means.

2. An image output processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the image output processor and the plurality of data processors are connected via a network.

20 3. An image output processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the image output processor and the plurality of data processors are connected via dedicated data communication channels.

25 4. An image output processor as claimed in Claim 3, wherein the data transmission source identifying means identifies the

source of data transmission by determining the communication channel used to transmit the data from the plurality of data processors; and the sorter bin determining means determines to which sorter bin to output data received from the plurality of data processors based on the communication channel identified by the data transmission source identifying means.

5. An image output processor as claimed in Claim 4, wherein the sorter bin determining means comprises a sorter bin determining table that associates communication channels connecting the data processors to the image output processor with the sorter bins in the printer; and the sorter bin determining means references the sorter bin determining table to determine to which sorter bin to output received data based on the communication channel identified by the data transmission source identifying means.

6. An image output processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the sorter bin determining means comprises a sorter bin determining table that associates the data processors connected to the image output processor with the sorter bins in the printer; and the sorter bin determining means references the sorter bin determining table to determine to which sorter bin to output received data based on the data processor identified as the data transmission source by the data transmission source identifying

means.

5 7. An image output processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the sorter bin determining means comprises a sorter bin determining table that associates attribute data included with the data transmitted from the plurality of data processors with the sorter bins in the printer; and the sorter bin determining means references the sorter bin determining table to determine to which sorter bin to output received data based on the attribute data identified by the data transmission source identifying means.

15 8. An image output processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the data transmission source identifying means supports a plurality of communication protocols and executes different types of processes for identifying the data transmission source based on the communication protocol used to transmit the data from the plurality of data processors.

20 9. An image output processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the sorter bin determining means executes a process for determining an appropriate printer to use in the output process.

25 10. An image output processor as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the data processors are medical diagnostic imaging

devices.

11. An image output processing method for receiving data transmitted from a plurality of data processors connected to the image output processor and outputting the data to a printer having a plurality of sorter bins, the image output processing method comprising the steps of:

identifying the data transmission source of data transmitted from the data processors; and

determining to which sorter bin to output the data received from the plurality of data processors based on the data transmission source identified in the step for identifying the data transmission source.

12. An image output processing method as claimed in Claim 11, wherein the step for determining to which sorter bin to output the data comprises referencing a sorter bin determining table that associates data processors connected to the image output processor with sorter bins in the printer, according to the data processor identified as the data transmission source in the step for identifying the data transmission source.